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Vancouver metro

Your essential daily news | THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2015

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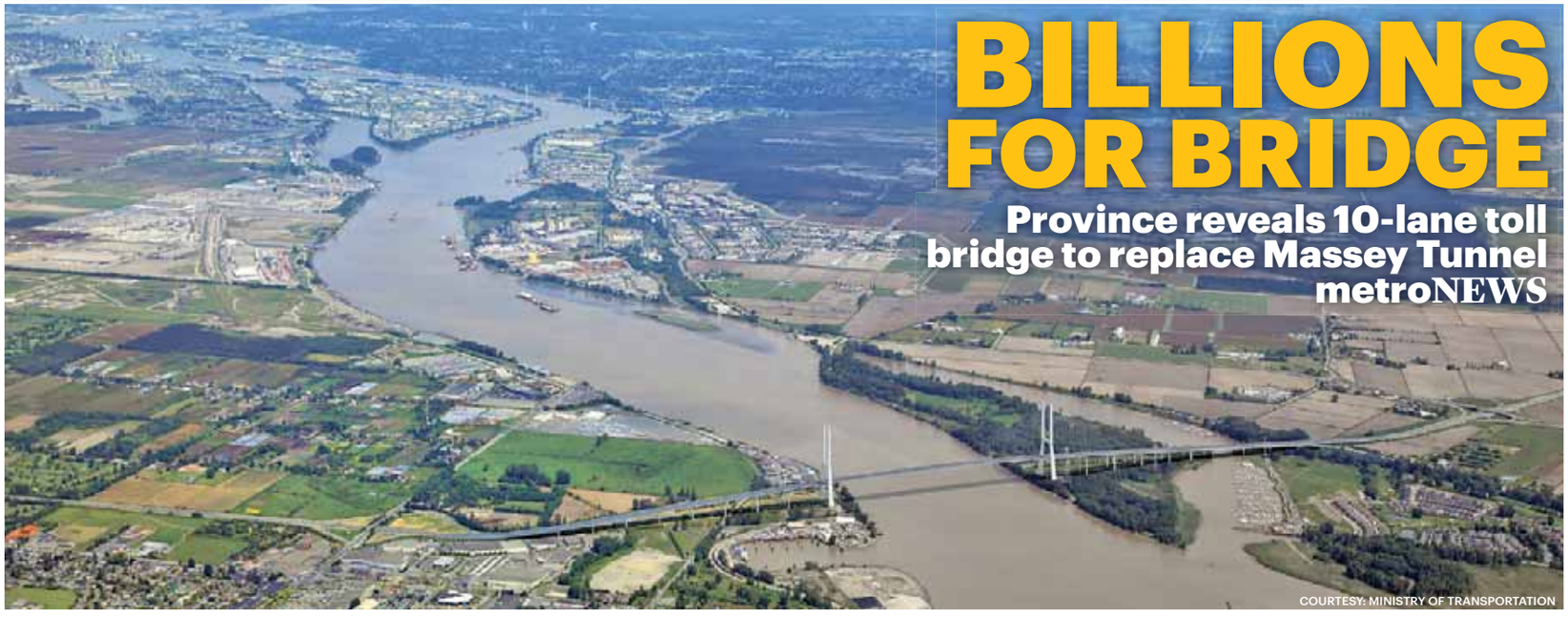

BILLIONS FOR BRIDGE

Province reveals 10-lane toll bridge to replace Massey Tunnel

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COURTESY: MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION

Rental rates spike, vacancies near zero

HOUSING

Vancouver 'crisis can't continue'

Emily Jackson
Metro | Vancouver

Vancouver's "vicious" rental market could soon make it impossible for people to live and work in the city, a Vancouver MLA said after a new report revealed apartment prices spiked and vacancy rates dropped even closer to zero in 2015.

Metro Vancouver's overall vacancy rate fell to 0.8 per cent in 2015, the first time it's been below one per cent since 2008, according to a Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation report released Wednesday.

Rents in desirable City of Vancouver neighbourhoods simultaneously jumped by up to 6.4 per cent — two and a half times higher than the legally allowable increase under B.C.'s Residential Tenancy Act, according to the report.

"There's a sense of desperation you get from people in the rental market, and this report shows this desperation is grounded in reality," Vancouver-Point Grey MLA David Eby said.

"This crisis can't continue as it is. It will eventually raise a gate that makes it impossible for people who work in the City of Vancouver to actually live here."

Despite 834 new apartment units built across the region in 2015 — the largest increase since 1986 — the vacancy dropped in every municipality except the District of North Vancouver and the City of Vancouver, which still have dangerously low vacancy rates at 0.5 and 0.6 per cent respectively.

A healthy vacancy rate is between three to four per cent, according to CMHC. More than half of Vancouverites are renters.

It believes the low vacancy was driven by immigration, people moving from provinces hit by plummeting oil prices and surging real estate prices that keep young people from buying homes.

Low vacancy led to price shocks in Vancouver's West End, where landlords jack up prices when tenants move out of old units, according to the CMHC. Average rents for a two-bedroom unit in the area jumped to $1,951 in 2015 from $1,849 in 2014. Citywide, two-bedroom rents jumped to $1,643 from $1,571 in 2014.

> **This report shows ... desperation is grounded in reality.**
> David Eby

Eby called on the provincial and federal governments to give subsidies to people who build rental housing and to dedicate government lands such as the Jericho Lands to affordable housing.

In an emailed statement, B.C.'s ministry responsible for housing said it will review the CMHC report and that it regularly reviews the Residential Tenancy Act to ensure it balances the rights of tenants and landlords.

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metro NEWS

Your essential daily news

A single word almost killed the Paris climate deal, until a Canadian saved the day. **Canada**

Feds prepare to reopen closed Kitsilano coast-guard station

OPEN WATERS

PM's campaign promise will be acted upon soon

A Vancouver coast guard base, shuttered amid controversy by the former Conservative government, will be reopening.

Fisheries Minister Hunter Tootoo toured the former Kitsilano coast guard station Wednesday with Premier Christy Clark and Mayor Gregor Robertson.

Tootoo said Vancouver residents take pride in having one of the most picturesque harbours in the world, while noting the port is also the largest and busiest in the country.

"Given the large volume of marine traffic and cargo that moves in and out of this port, it is important that the Canadian Coast Guard has an active and visible presence on these waters," he told a reporter while standing in front of the base.

The closure of the station in 2013 as a cost-cutting measure was loudly criticized at the time and again when a grain ship spilled 2,800 litres of bunker fuel into Vancouver's harbour last April.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made an election campaign promise to reopen the base, which he reaffirmed in a mandate letter when Tootoo was appointed the minister in charge of the coast guard last month.

Members of the Canadian Coast Guard leave the Kitsilano facility following a federal-government news conference Wednesday in Vancouver. The facility was closed by the previous government in 2013. DARRYL DYCK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Tootoo said preliminary work to restore the long-abandoned site will begin shortly and it will be "back in business" as soon as possible.

The coast guard estimated in 2013 that the closure would save the federal government about $700,000 annually. Tootoo said he did not yet have an estimate for the cost of re-opening.

Asked whether the base would be staffed at the level it was previously, Tootoo said he's asked the coast guard to come up with a staffing proposal. But the minister vowed the base would be an around-the-clock operation that meets the high standard of all stations across Canada.

Clark said she was pleased the new federal government made the change for the safety of those who use the harbour.

"It's never too late to reverse a mistake that was made," she said. "We are so delighted that you're keeping that promise today."

Robertson said the reopening of the base, which responded to 300 calls a year, was "great news" for the city.

$700,000

The amount, estimated by the Canadian Coast Guard, that the federal government saved annually by shuttering the Kitsilano station.

"We saw a real challenge this past summer with the oil spill here in English Bay," he said. "Not having resources here on this site, just a stone's throw from where the oil was spilled on the harbour, certainly made a difference."

The coast guard faced heavy criticism for its response to the spill after it took 12 hours to install an oil-absorbing boom around the ship and to notify the city.

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Kit and Ace cancels free valet parking over gripes

KITSILANO

City says the zoning permit was granted by mistake

Emily Jackson
Metro | Vancouver

Luxury retailer Kit and Ace's idea to offer free valet parking service at its Kitsilano store as a holiday gift to shoppers is screeching to a halt after complaints from neighbours.

The local retailer, famous for selling $100 T-shirts and for its billionaire founders (it's owned by Lululemon creator Chip Wilson's wife Shannon and son JJ), decided to provide valet parking at its West 4th Avenue and Water Street locations from Dec. 11-13 and Dec. 18-20 as a no-purchase-necessary perk to delight shoppers during the hectic holiday season.

While the service went off without a hitch in Gastown, where a bay makes for easier parking, Kitsilano neighbours — including the Kitsilano Wine Cellar — wrote councillors to express dismay that Kit and Ace was given use of a coveted parking spot on one of the busiest shopping days of the year.

On Wednesday, the day after Coun. Melissa De Genova asked staff to elaborate on the city's "pop-up valet-parking policy," the city revoked the permit, city communications manager Tobin Postma said in an email.

Kit and Ace applied for the parking spot, under the city's process for temporary special zone permits for parking spots or meters, and paid $465 for its permit. It was granted on Dec. 3. These permits are typically for construction, moving trucks, deliveries or service work and must be acquired at least seven days in advance.

"However, an error was found in granting the permit as it was not confirmed that the neighbouring businesses were in support of the permit as it resulted in the temporary loss of parking space in front of other businesses," Postma wrote.

The city would reconsider the valet zone request if it had the support of the local business improvement association and consulted with neighbouring businesses.

Kit and Ace confirmed it will not offer valet parking in Kitsilano during the upcoming weekend.

The service, which was available to anyone even if they didn't set foot in Kit and Ace, was supposed to be helpful and please customers, according to Kit and Ace public relations. The retailer also suspended the valet service for two hours last Sunday because people were upset.

Kit and Ace prides itself on being a good neighbour, according to the public-relations team, and didn't want to upset anybody this time of year. Customers will still be able to get free valet parking in Gastown this weekend.

Kit and Ace's valet parking sign on Kitsilano Beach. The shop will no longer provide valet parking in the neighbourhood but will continue to do so in Gastown. INSTAGRAM/@KITANDACE

> **It was not confirmed that the neighbouring businesses were in support of the permit.**
> City communications manager Tobin Postma

GOOGLE

City's search trends for 2015

Tereza Verenca
Metro | Vancouver

Yaletown, Whistler and umbrella were among the top trending Google searches in Vancouver this year.

The Internet giant revealed its Year in Search on Wednesday, offering a snapshot of what Canadians type into their search bar.

In the battle of the neighbourhoods, Vancouverites were more interested in Yaletown than Kitsilano or Gastown. Yaletown outpaced its competitors by 20 per cent.

Despite our dry summer, there were two searches for "umbrella" for every "sunscreen" search in Vancouver.

For locals looking to get out into the mountains, Whistler searches topped Blackcomb by 900 per cent.

Across Canada, the No. 1 searched term was Blue Jays, followed by Justin Trudeau, the federal election and the Pan Am Games.

"It's not surprising; we are huge sports fans in this country and we do rally around our teams, just like we've done for the Vancouver Canucks in the past or during the Olympics," said Google Canada trends expert Aaron Brindle. "And we were also kind of civic-minded. There's substance there, like Canadians looking at how to vote online and who are my candidates, these kinds of things."

The top celebrity was the late Chris Hyndman, the Canadian interior decorator and CBC personality who died in August after allegedly sleepwalking off his terrace.

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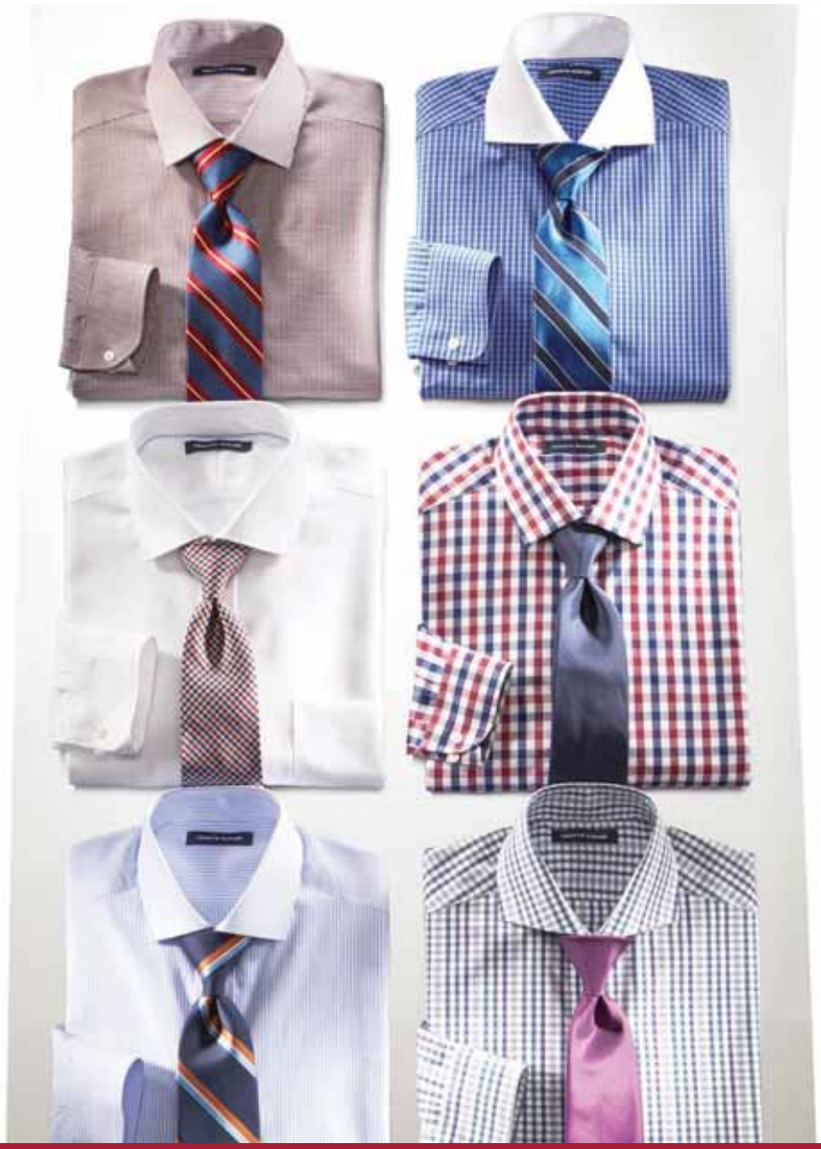

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Council says no to selling wine in five grocery stores

PILOT PROGRAM

Private liquor sellers say it would hurt their business

Emily Jackson
Metro | Vancouver

A proposal to sell B.C. wine in five Vancouver grocery stores for a one-year pilot project went down the drain on Wednesday.

Vancouver council voted against the staff recommendation to test out grocery store wine sales — a policy the provincial government approved in April — citing concerns about exposing minors to alcohol and the need for a more comprehensive approach to liquor policy reform.

Instead, it referred the idea back to staff so they can deal with it as part of a larger review on how Vancouver should adapt to B.C.'s new, looser liquor laws.

Vision Vancouver councillors spearheaded the referral after Vancouver Coastal Health medical health officer Dr. Patricia Daly spoke about the adverse effects of alcohol and reminded them of the 2011 Stanley Cup Riots.

Daly said that 93 per cent of Vancouverites live within walking distance of a liquor store so there is no urgency to expanding sales to grocery stores. Her colleague expressed concerns that mothers on a budget might choose a bottle of wine over veggies at the cash register in order to bring down the bill.

"It's going to take a lot to convince me that alcohol in grocery stores is a good idea," Coun. Kerry Jang said in response. Coun. Tim Stevenson echoed Jang, expressing concerns about a 12-year-old child seeing alcohol at a grocery store.

But Mike Olson, vice president at B.C.-based grocer Overwaitea Food Group (it owns Save-On-Foods and Urban Fare), noted that kids are allowed in liquor stores as well. He said his business, which pays its unionized employees a living wage, wants to feature 100 per cent B.C. wines to give smaller vineyards a chance.

Liquor sales in grocery stores began on April 1 at Save-On-Foods in Surrey. The vice president of a B.C. based company, which owns Save-On-Foods, says they want to feature local wines in their stores to help local vineyards. JENNIFER GAUTHIER/METRO

> **We take great pride in selling as many local products as possible ... we can't understand why anyone would want to take this opportunity away from local farmers.** Mike Olson

"We take great pride in selling as many local products as possible. We share that with the City of Vancouver," Olson said. "We can't understand why anyone would want to take this opportunity away from local farmers.

A representative from the B.C. Wine Institute, which represents 240 family-owned wine makers, said grocery store shelves open markets for hundreds of small businesses looking for access to consumers.

But council, which frequently touts the importance of buying and eating local as part of its healthy and greenest city strategies, decided there needed to be a stricter framework before allowing a pilot program.

The chair of the B.C. Private Liquor Store Association and a man from the B.C. Government and Services Employees' Union seemed pleased by council's decision to send the idea back for more study.

Private liquor stores have argued that selling wine in grocery stores will hurt their business, while the union is worried they could lose jobs from public liquor stores.

Wine is already sold at grocery stores in Surrey, White Rock, Tsawwassen and Langley.

POLITICS

Trudeau to visit city hall

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will meet with Mayor Gregor Robertson at Vancouver City Hall on Thursday morning, the mayor's office announced Wednesday.

When Trudeau walks through the doors, he'll be the first sitting prime minister to pay a visit to the municipal headquarters since 1973 when his dad Pierre Trudeau held Canada's highest office.

Aside from a photo op and a media availability, the mayor's office did not disclose what the politicians plan to discuss.

But when they met in Paris in November, Robertson said he lobbied for transit investments across all Canadian cities. Robertson also held a news conference when Trudeau was elected in October where transit, particularly the $3-billion Broadway Subway, seemed to top his priority list.

"I'd like to think that having a prime minister that considers Vancouver his second home will be important for recognizing the specific challenges here on the ground," Robertson said at the time. "I'm looking forward to that relationship the prime minister has to Vancouver being an important one."

EMILY JACKSON/METRO

Gregor Robertson and Justin Trudeau INSTAGRAM

Mayor wants Trump out

HATE

Developer asked to remove brand from tower

Emily Jackson
Metro | Vancouver

Mayor Gregor Robertson has joined a chorus of 50,000 online petitioners demanding local developer Holborn cut ties with the Trump brand due to persistently racist comments made by Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump.

Robertson sent a letter to Holborn CEO Joo Kim Tiah on Tuesday outlining his concerns over co-branding with Trump and asking Holborn to "work quickly to remove his brand and all it represents from your building."

Holborn announced its partnership with Trump with great fanfare at a news conference featuring strawberries and champagne in June 2013. Trump was chosen to operate the hotel at Holborn's 63-storey tower designed by Arthur Erikson on West Georgia between Bute and Thurlow. The building will also feature 217 condos and a pool bar nightclub.

Donald Trump at the Trump Vancouver International Hotel on June 19, 2013. EMILY JACKSON/METRO

"Donald Trump's hateful positions and commentary remind us all of much darker times in our world's past — and it is incumbent upon all of us to forcefully challenge hatred in all of the ways that it confronts us," Robertson wrote, trumpeting Vancouver's openness and diversity.

"Trump's name and brand have no more place on Vancouver's skyline than his ignorant ideas have in the modern world."

Outrage over the Trump tower gained steam when former city planner Brent Toderian took to social media last week to condemn Trump's comments on banning Muslims from entering the U.S., stating the brand has no place in the city. Coun. Kerry Jang subsequently called the tower a "beacon of racism" and texted Tiah asking him to get rid of the brand.

> **"Trump's name and brand have no more place on Vancouver's skyline than his ignorant ideas have in the modern world."**
> Mayor Gregor Robertson

But in emailed statements attributed to Tiah, Holborn expressed no intention of breaking up with Trump due to contractual obligations.

"While Holborn Group owns Trump Vancouver, we have contractual obligations to the Trump Organization, banks, purchasers, consultants, trades and business partners. These legally binding contracts cannot be altered," Tiah said.

He said Trump's views are part of a political campaign, and Holborn does not comment on political issues. Holborn did, however, donate $75,000 to Vision Vancouver (the mayor's party) during the 2014 election campaign.

IN BRIEF

UBC hires investigator to review response to sexual assault complaints

The University of British Columbia has hired an independent investigator to review its response to sexual-assault and harassment allegations raised by a group of former and current students.

Three women held a news conference last month to complain that school administrators took a year and a half to act on multiple allegations of sexual assault against a PhD student.

Associate vice-president of equity and inclusion Sara-Jane Finlay says UBC has hired Vancouver labour and employment lawyer Paula Butler to review the case. Finlay says a report will be ready in February.

The incident exposed the university's lack of specific procedures to respond to sexual-assault complaints, instead relying on a general discrimination and harassment policy.

Finlay says UBC will announce in January initiatives to support the development of a standalone sexual-assault policy. THE CANADIAN PRESS

User tolls will fund B.C.'s largest bridge to replace Massey Tunnel

INFRASTRUCTURE

10-lane span will link Delta to Richmond

User-pay tolls will be implemented to fund the replacement of the George Massey Tunnel with what will be British Columbia's largest bridge in history, Transportation Minister Todd Stone said on Wednesday.

Stone has unveiled plans for the new 10-lane span to be constructed in the same alignment as the nearly 60-year-old tunnel under the Fraser River that connects Richmond and Delta.

"That tunnel unleashed a dramatic amount of economic development and entire communities developed as a result," Stone told reporters at an announcement in Richmond.

"We expect that the same thing is going to happen with this new bridge, in recognizing a million more people are coming in the next 20 years. They've got to live somewhere."

But Stone said government hasn't yet computed the toll rate for the 3.3-kilometre project, only that he expects the rate to be comparable to the toll on the Port Mann Bridge. Cars on the Highway 1 route between Coquitlam and Surrey pay $3.15 per crossing, while motorhomes pay $6.30 and commercial trucks pay $9.45.

Stone said the province has asked the federal government for a funding contribution by explaining the bridge is the province's "No. 1 infrastructure priority." The province has also asked Port Metro Vancouver for money, since the route is used to move commercial goods to nearby ports.

Any funding commitments from those sources would either go to reducing driver tolls or cutting the debt-repayment period, he said.

A screen grab from a government promotional video shows the planned 10-lane, $3.5 billion bridge that is expected to take about five years to build. COURTESY MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION

The bridge was first announced in September 2012 with officials acknowledging the current tunnel had become B.C.'s biggest traffic bottleneck. The tunnel has about 10 years left before expensive upgrades will be required and it doesn't meet modern earthquake standards, Stone said.

The benefits of building the bridge include reducing commuting times and the potential for creating 9,000 direct jobs and 8,000 indirect jobs, Stone said.

The province also estimates the bridge will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by chopping up to one million hours of vehicle idling time per year.

Construction on the bridge along Highway 99 is scheduled to begin in 2017 and last about five years. It will include dedicated transit and HOV lanes, as well as pathways for pedestrians and cyclists who previously had to use a shuttle.

"We have waited in Delta a long, long time for an announcement to alleviate the problems of our commuters and our economy in terms of the truck traffic moving through that area," said Delta Mayor Lois Jackson during the news conference.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

CRIME

Surrey RCMP make arrests in ongoing turf war over drugs

Matt Kieltyka
Metro | Vancouver

Five people have been arrested and a sixth man is wanted as Surrey RCMP clamp down on continuing violence linked to a dispute between two gangs.

The arrests were made on Dec. 5 when police received reports of a man being assaulted, threatened and held against his will in the area of 86th Avenue and 130th Street.

Davjit Randhawa, 31, Sukhdeep Dhaliwal, 19, Chaten Dhindsa, 20, Gurpreet Dhudwal, 18, and Ravinder Samra, 28, were all arrested at the scene and face multiple charges including robbery, forcible confinement and assault with a weapon. A sixth man, 27-year-old Karnjit Randhawa, is wanted by RCMP.

Police allege the incident is linked to an ongoing dispute between low-level drug groups that's led to multiple shootings and other acts of violence in the city this year.

The victim is also well known to police and is recovering from his injuries, RCMP say.

In efforts to curb the violence, Surrey RCMP say it — along with the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit provincial gang task force — has searched more than 6,200 people, arrested or detained 800, and seized more than 160 weapons so far in 2015.

"We believe that arresting these individuals and advancing prosecutions against them will create a safer community," said Surrey RCMP Chief Superintendent Bill Fordy in a statement. "We will continue to aggressively advance a broad base of strategies on those that we believe are associated with the violent acts that have played out in our streets."

The suspects have been released from custody, pending their next court appearances, under conditions that include 24/7 house arrest and no contact with each other.

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TRANSLINK

This imitation firearm is alleged to have been used by an Abbotsford man in a crime spree. COURTESY ABBOTSFORD POLICE

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Abbotsford police defuse armed scene

Matt Kieltyka
Metro | Vancouver

"Amazing restraint" was shown by Abbotsford police officers in arresting a man they considered armed with a firearm, department officials say.

Police initially were called to a strip mall near George Ferguson Way and Gladwin Road shortly after 8 p.m. on Tuesday, after reports that a male had aimed a gun at a woman and child.

As officers raced to the scene, another call came in from a nearby grocery store where the same suspect allegedly smashed a piece of glass, pointed his gun at pharmacy employees and stole a small quantity of drugs.

Police made it to the scene just as the suspect was leaving the store, where he allegedly then pointed his gun at officers.

"This was an extremely dangerous situation," Abbotsford police spokesman Const. Ian MacDonald said in a statement.

"Several citizens had a gun pointed at them … officers were also placed in an incredible high-stress situation when the man exited the grocery store with that gun in hand and pointed it at officers."

Despite the danger, MacDonald said officers "showed amazing restraint" and were able to arrest the suspect, a 57-year-old Abbotsford man, with further incident.

The weapon, police said, turned out to be an imitation BB gun.

The suspect faces possible charges of robbery, breaking and entering, mischief and pointing a firearm.

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Clark vows openness

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

Barriers to public info are coming down, premier says

Premier Christy Clark is promising to break down public-information barriers that successive Liberal governments have erected in British Columbia by allowing cabinet ministers and political appointees to delete potentially sensitive records.

The pledge comes after a second report was released Wednesday, recommending the government stop its practice of triple-deleting emails in an effort to clean out an information paper trial.

Clark said that policy will end, and legislation that places a duty to document records across government will be introduced following a committee review.

> **We haven't kept up, obviously.**
> Premier Christy Clark

Former B.C. privacy commissioner David Loukidelis said in his 70-page report that "government has the opportunity to seize the initiative and demonstrate, through specific actions recommended here, commitment to openness and accountability."

The report and its 27 recommendations, follow last October's damning investigation by B.C.'s current privacy commissioner Elizabeth Denham who highlighted a failure to keep adequate email records or document searches and the wilful destruction of records in response to a freedom-of-information request.

Denham's probe was launched after a whistleblower said his former supervisor in the Transportation Ministry deleted documents requesting information about the Highway of Tears investigation into murdered and missing women on the northern B.C. route.

Clark admitted her government has not been as sharp as it should be on information management, especially public access to information.

"We haven't kept up, obviously," she said. "I'm hoping that answering Mr. Loukidelis's report and doing what he recommends is going to mean that we are back at the forefront of being a really open and transparent government."

Opposition New Democrat Leader John Horgan said he remains skeptical about Clark's commitment to freedom of information despite pledges to follow the recommendations of the Loukidelis report.

"The proof will be in the pudding," he said. "If the public can access the information that rightly belongs to them then we can give them a thumbs up. Until such time as they've proved that, I don't believe Mr. Loukidelis is hoping that the duty to document will appear sometime in the future is sufficient."

The New Democrats alleged during the fall sitting of the legislature that the government was manipulating information policy because freedom-of-information requests for documents on major issues in the transportation and health ministries came back empty.

The NDP appealed to Denham's office to review their requests which produced hundreds of pages of documents on files involving the so-called Highway of Tears and the firings of eight Health Ministry workers. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau addressed questions from journalists and the public at the National Arts Centre on Wednesday. ADRIAN WYLD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

PM opens up at town hall

Q & A

Justin Trudeau gives views on CF-18s, Trump and photo ops

Michael Woods
Metro | Ottawa

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau took questions from journalists and the public at an hour-long town hall hosted by Maclean's Magazine at the National Arts Centre Wednesday. Here are three notable moments from his Q & A.

1 **CF-18s:** Trudeau said U.S. President Barack Obama hasn't asked him to reconsider his pledge to withdraw Canada's CF-18 fighter jets from the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

"I've made it very clear that our commitment was to withdraw the CF-18s," Trudeau said. "He didn't ask me to keep those in, nor would I have kept them in if he had asked me."

2 **Donald Trump:** Asked about Donald Trump's politics, Trudeau shied away from commenting directly on U.S. politics. But without mentioning Trump's name, he slammed "the politics of intolerance and hateful rhetoric."

"If we allow politicians to succeed by scaring people, we don't actually end up any safer. Fear doesn't make us safer, it makes us weaker," Trudeau said. "We need to remain focused on keeping our communities safe and keeping our communities united instead of trying to build walls and scapegoat communities.

"Painting (ISIL) and others with a broad brush that extends to all Muslims is not just ignorant, it is irresponsible."

3 **Charm Offensive:** Trudeau was asked about his charm offensive since taking office, such as posing in Vogue Magazine.

"It's not about image. It's about substance," he said. "That's what so many of my political opponents haven't understood." He said serving Canadians well means listening to them and engaging in "real conversations." It also means talking to a broad range of publications.

COURT

Mike Duffy trial persists
After six days of sharing career reminiscences and grievances about life in the Conservative fold, Sen. Mike Duffy on Wednesday faced the Crown's scrutiny of his version of events and of the particulars of where he actually lives.

The Crown is scheduled to continue its cross-examination on Thursday. Lawyers discussed with the judge the need for more time to wrap up the trial. THE CANADIAN PRESS

FORCE AWAKENS

Kids 'sworn to secrecy' on Star Wars plot

It's not exactly the Official Secrets Act, but it's close.

Eleven kids from the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Ottawa had to swear not to disclose the plot of the upcoming Star Wars: The Force Awakens until it comes out in theatres.

For that, they got to attend a private preview on Tuesday night with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

"Last night they were treated like royalty," Isabelle Mailloux of the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Foundation said in an interview.

"He made them feel special," Mailloux said. "Each one was a special guest. It was adorable."

The children ranged from eight to 18 and have a variety of ailments. Some are being treated for cancer. One has lost a leg. Another is on dialysis.

"They were sworn to secrecy about the plot of the movie until it comes out," Mailloux said. "They loved that, too." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Trudeau tweeted out this photo from his account during a private screening of the new film. TWITTER

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Clockwise from left: French Foreign Minister and COP21 President Laurent Fabius with United Nations General Secretary of the Climate Convention Christiana Figueres, COP21 General Secretary Pierre-Henri Guignard and UN Deputy Executive Secretary of the Climate Change Secretariat Richard Kinley, during COP21 on Dec. 2. ERIC FEFERBERG/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

One word almost kills climate deal

PARIS

Canadian apologizes for error in document

A single one-syllable, five-letter word almost scuttled the Paris climate deal, and it was a Canadian who, literally, had to sit in front of the world and sort it out at the 11th hour.

Not to mention apologize for an error the United States would never accept if allowed to stand.

The apology came from Winnipeg-born Richard Kinley. Previously an official with the Canadian government, Kinley is second-in-command to Christiana Figueres, executive secretary to the United Nations-led Framework Convention on Climate Change.

This means Kinley manages the UN's climate shop, including the behind-the-scenes machinery that led to the final Paris text — version I.9 — which carried the following contentious line: "Developed country parties shall continue taking the lead by undertaking economy-wide absolute emission reduction targets."

The problem word is "shall." In international law that seemingly benign word creates a legally binding commitment. But, such obligations require Senate approval in the U.S. — at least as they relate to emissions targets. If the "shall" were allowed to stay, there would be no chance U.S. President Barack Obama could secure domestic support for the agreement.

Republicans in the Senate would vote it down, and the Paris climate change deal would fall apart.

There were two options: reopen the text for further revision, which risked having other countries step forward with other demands, or admit the mistake — in front of delegates from 196 countries.

Richard Kinley
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

The latter option was chosen, and it was Kinley who had to break the news that the word "shall" needed to be changed to "should." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

IN BRIEF

Canada presses North Korea for access to pastor

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau expressed "tremendous concern" at the life sentence handed to a Canadian pastor in North Korea on Wednesday. Hyeon Soo Lim was sentenced for "crimes against the state."
THE CANADIAN PRESS

Black endorses Trump

Donald Trump hasn't received too many ringing endorsements from famous conservative elites — but he's just received praise from one Canadians know well. Conrad Black has penned a piece titled Trump Is the Good Guy.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

IMMIGRATION

Integration key to student success

A sweeping new study of immigrant students around the world shows they do best in countries that bring them into regular classrooms as quickly as possible, where teachers feel comfortable working with children of different backgrounds and where extra help is offered to immigrant families.

The 124-page report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), to be released Thursday, looks at how immigrant students in some 30 countries, including Canada, performed on a standardized test in the "3 Rs" in 2012, and concludes their success depends largely on how the host country helps them integrate in school.

"Immigrant students perform better and report feeling more accepted in some countries than others, which suggests education policy has an impact on integration," said the report.

It suggests the countries that best help immigrant students succeed move them into regular classrooms while giving them a crash course in their new language, rather than segregate them until they have mastered the language, as happens in some countries.
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Russian monk Grigory (Pobozhin) with his cat Koshka.
ANNA GALPERINA/ARTOS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Halo Kitty

NOVELTY

Church puts 'cat' in Catholic with new calendar

A group of Christian enthusiasts has released a calendar showing an unexpected face of the Russian Orthodox Church: cat-loving priests.

The Priest and Cat calendar released earlier this month by photographer Anna Galperina and editor Ksenia Luchenko shows 12 Orthodox priests at their homes posing with their cats.

Luchenko said the idea was totally spontaneous but it can now be viewed as a Russian Orthodox answer to the annual Italian Calendario Romano, featuring handsome young priests of the Roman Catholic Church, and the Gatti di Roma calendar filled with Rome's cats.

Luchenko said some of priests refused to be photographed, fearing that the project would be too "pop."

"To be honest, it feels a bit strange, when you call priests and ask: 'Father, tell me please, do you have a cat? Oh, you do? Great!" she said. "So the initial reaction was a bit wary."

Father Pyotr Dynnikov who posed as Mr. February said he liked the idea because the calendar lends the church a lighter and less official dimension.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JAPAN

Wife, husband must share surname: Court

Japan's Supreme Court ruled Wednesday that requiring married couples to have the same surname is constitutional, dealing a blow to a longtime effort for gender equality.

The law does not say which partner must give up his or her name. In practice, it has been the woman. Men are seen as more powerful in Japanese traditional culture. But as women have careers, some argue that changing surnames is confusing. Some Japanese women continue to use their maiden name professionally, even after their surnames are legally changed following marriage. Some couples simply don't register their marriages.

Kaori Okuni, one of the plaintiffs, was deeply disappointed.

"This has consequences for the future, meaning suffering for those who plan to marry and those who are set to be born," she said.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RESEARCH

Old whaling logs reveal climate change

Maritime historians, climate scientists and ordinary citizens are coming together on a project to study the logbooks of 19th-century whaling ships to better understand modern-day climate change and Arctic weather patterns.

Whaling ships kept meticulous daily logbooks of weather conditions during their often years-long voyages searching the globe for whales, valued for their light-giving oil, said Michael Dyer, senior maritime historian at the New Bedford Whaling Museum in Massachusetts, which is supplying much of the data.

Some logs include information about life on board, and of course, notations whenever whales are spotted. More important for this project, they include precise longitude and latitude measurements, weather conditions, the presence of icebergs and the edge of the ice shelf.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

New Bedford Whaling Museum senior maritime historian Michael Dyer with several whaling vessel log books
STEPHAN SAVOIA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Freshwater lakes heating fast

Waves crash during a November gale at Lake Superior's Government Beach in Ontario. A new study suggests lakes on average are warming much faster than the climate as a whole.
THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

CLIMATE

Lake Superior second-fastest warming lake in world: study

Our rapidly warming world has another high-profile victim — lakes.

An alarming new study says freshwater lakes are warming at more than twice the pace of oceans, and Lake Superior is the second-fastest warming lake in the world, behind Sweden's Lake Fracksjon.

The rest of the Great Lakes are also faring dismally, the study says, putting native fish in jeopardy, increasing the risk of invasive species and raising fears of widespread algae blooms.

> **"It was shocking to find that over 90 per cent are warming.**
> Sapna Sharma, lead author of the study

The study, by a team of international scientists, analyzed data from hundreds of lakes around the world. It found that summer surface temperatures rose by about 0.34 C on average between 1985 and 2009.

That may not sound like a lot, acknowledged Sapna Sharma, the lead author of the study and an assistant professor in the faculty of science at York University. But put that in context with air temperatures and ocean temperature increase and "you see there is a big difference," she said.

Average air temperatures over the same period have warmed about 0.24 C, while oceans have warmed about 0.11 C, she said.

Lakes that are covered with ice in winter, like most Canadian lakes, are warming twice as fast because the lakes are increasingly ice-free earlier and for longer periods.

The Great Lakes are also facing an increase in solar radiation, another factor for the rapid warming of freshwater lakes.

The study, published Wednesday in Geophysical Research Letters, examined data from 236 lakes. Some readings came from NASA satellites; others came from data collected on the ground. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

0.34
Average degrees in Celsius by which summer surface lake temperatures have risen between 1985-2009.

0.24
Average degrees in Celsius by which air temperatures have risen in the same time period.

0.11
Average degrees in Celsius by which oceans have warmed from 1985-2009.

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FRANCE

Charlie Hebdo to gift $4.4M

Charlie Hebdo, the satirical newspaper in Paris whose staff had been decimated by Islamic extremist gunmen and then beset by internal tensions over an unexpected influx of donations and readers, said Wednesday it will turn over all the money to victims of the three days of attacks in January.

A pair of French-born brothers killed 12 people during an editorial meeting on Jan. 7. The publication had been targeted for its caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad.

The three days of attacks, co-ordinated with a third man targeting a kosher supermarket and policewoman, left a total of 17 dead before the gunmen were shot to death in police raids.

Suddenly flush with cash from donations and a global readership, the weekly saw tension among surviving staff, in large part over the money.

In a statement Wednesday, Charlie Hebdo said it would turn over nearly $4.4 million US, and that the French government had appointed an oversight committee to determine how the money would be redistributed in coming weeks. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

84
The number of countries from which Charlie Hebdo received donations. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

UNITED STATES

Mistrial in first Freddie Gray case

The first effort to find a police officer criminally responsible for Freddie Gray's death from a broken neck in a police van ended Wednesday with a hung jury and a mistrial in Baltimore, Md.

Six officers have been charged in Gray's death. William Porter has been accused of failing to get medical help for a wounded Gray and has been charged with assault, manslaughter, misconduct in office and reckless endangerment.

It was not immediately clear whether he will face a retrial.

Gray, 25, who had been suspected of possessing an illegal switchblade, was arrested while fleeing from officers and died April 19, a week after his neck was broken inside a police van. He had been left handcuffed, shackled and face-down on the floor of the metal compartment.

An autopsy concluded Gray probably couldn't brace himself whenever the van turned a corner or braked suddenly. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ANGOLA

Rights group urges Minaj to cancel concert

A rights group is lobbying rapper Nicki Minaj to cancel her Saturday concert in Luanda, Angola, a country often criticized for corruption and human rights abuses.

The Human Rights Foundation had written to Minaj, urging her to cancel the show and instead support a local rapper who has been jailed along with other activists.

A representative for Minaj did not immediately respond. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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See your GM dealer or gm.ca for full contest rules and program details. ^ Offer available to qualified retail customers in Canada for vehicles delivered between December 4th, 2015 and January 4th, 2016. 0% purchase financing offered on approved credit by TD Auto Finance Services, Scotiabank® or RBC Royal Bank for 84 months on all new or demonstrator 2015 Spark, Sonic, Cruze LS 1SA, Malibu (except LS), Volt, Impala, Camaro, Trax, Equinox LS AWD, Traverse, Colorado 2WD, Silverado 1500 Double Cab 2WD WT and Silverado HD's WT 2WD with gas engine. Participating lenders are subject to change. Rates from other lenders will vary. Down payment, trade and/or security deposit may be required. Monthly payment and cost of borrowing will vary depending on amount borrowed and down payment/trade. Example: $40,000 at 0% APR, the monthly payment is $476.19 for 84 months. Cost of borrowing is $0, total obligation is $40,000. Offer is unconditionally interest-free. 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Canada, U.S. seen to be parting ways

INTEREST RATE

BoC won't match Federal Reserve hike, expert predicts

The U.S. Federal Reserve raised its interest rate Wednesday, exerting downward pressure on the loonie that has been steadily dropping in recent months as global oil prices plunged.

The American central bank lifted its key rate by a quarter-point to a range of 0.25 per cent to 0.5 per cent, ending a seven-year period of near-zero borrowing rates.

Scott Guitard, a portfolio manager at Fiduciary Trust Canada, said climbing American interest rates will likely mean the opposite for the Canadian dollar.

He also predicts Canada's central bank will stick with its decision to hold steady on its key lending rate even if the loonie falls further because of enduring low oil prices.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, speaking ahead of the announcement, said it was a good sign the American economy was seeing a resurgence, but promised to examine the challenges that a lower dollar poses for the Canadian economy. THE CANADIAN PRESS

ECONOMY

Faith restored

Wednesday's action reflects the U.S. Federal Reserve's belief that the American economy has finally regained enough strength 6 ½ years after the Great Recession ended to withstand modestly higher borrowing rates. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

COMPUTER LITERACY PUSH TO CREATE TECHIE TYKES
Third-grader Jaysean Erby solves a coding problem as Apple CEO Tim Cook watches from behind during a coding workshop at an Apple Store in New York last week. There's a push across the U.S. to improve computer literacy in elementary school, and entrepreneurs are jumping aboard. But some critics warn that pushing advanced concepts on younger kids could frustrate them and turn them off computer science completely. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

IN BRIEF

Shaw buying Wind Mobile
Shaw Communications has reached an agreement to buy Wind Mobile in a transaction valued at $1.6 billion. The Calgary-based telecommunications company says it will acquire a full interest in parent company Mid-Bowline Group, which owns Wind. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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CHILDREN'S FINANCIAL FUTURE

Parents delaying retirement

Half of Canadian parents say they would postpone retirement because of concerns about the financial future of their children.

Parents with children aged 18 to 24 said they were willing to trade some of their own financial security to help out their kids in a changing economy, BMO Wealth Management said in a report.

22%
The percentage of parents who said they would take on debt to help their kids in a changing economy.

Half said they would be willing to retire later than planned, one-third said they would save less for retirement, and 22 per cent said they would take on debt.

Roughly the same proportion who said they would retire later than planned said they received little or no support from their parents when they were young adults themselves.

The biggest financial concern for parents about their children was financial problems caused by debt, followed by difficulties achieving financial independence and insufficient employment.

The so-called millennial generation of those born after 1980 faces different economic realities than their parents, especially after the 2008 financial crisis. The number of contract workers has grown more than four times faster than the number of full-time employees since 2008, according to Statistics Canada. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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metro VIEWS
Your essential daily news
Thursday, December 17, 2015

CHANTAL HÉBERT: ON THE SENATE SCANDAL (IT'S STILL ON)

Gone are the days when the re-election of a government, the reputation of a sitting prime minister or the ascent of an Opposition leader could hang in the balance of the Duffy trial.

It is not totally true to say that the legal travails of Stephen Harper's former star senator are no longer of any real consequence to anyone but himself. A dozen of Mike Duffy's past and present Senate colleagues have cause to wait for the trial verdict with bated breath.

They are on the list of current or ex-senators whose expense claims were brought to the attention of the RCMP over the past two years. Take Pamela Wallin, who is back in the upper house since the election. There has not been a word on where she stands since the RCMP reportedly transferred her file to the Crown prosecutors last summer.

The odds that the other senators engulfed in the scandal will be charged and/or taken to trial stand to decrease if Duffy is found not guilty of all or most of the 31 criminal charges laid against him.

That being said, gone are the days when the re-election of a government, the reputation of a sitting prime minister or the ascent of a prosecutorial Opposition leader could be presumed to hang in the balance of the Duffy trial.

At this time last year, Duffy, Harper and Thomas Mulcair were the leading co-stars in a high-stakes political drama that was deemed to have the potential to reshape the electoral landscape.

Harper is headed for political retirement, but not mostly for what the Duffy trial has brought to light.

Twelve months later, there has yet to be a definitive resolution to the Senate spending saga but the storyline has fizzled out; the audience has lost interest; the spotlight has shifted and the curtain has fallen in whole or in part on its main protagonists.

That is as good a measure of what a difference a year in politics can make.

At this time last year, Harper looked well-placed to make electoral history by winning a fourth consecutive mandate. The rise to pre-eminence of the security issue in the wake of the Parliament Hill shootings had given his party a second wind. For the first time since the Senate scandal, the Conservatives were seeing positive omens in public opinion.

That gave rise to trepidation about the upcoming Duffy trial and even talk of an early election to minimize the risks.

These days, most Harper-related speculation is of an idle variety. It revolves around the timing of his definitive departure from the House of Commons. Most expect it will come sooner rather than later. Some wonder why it has not happened yet.

For the record, there is nothing exceptional about the fact that Harper is still an MP. It may be one of the more normal features of his exit from politics. Paul Martin was defeated in January 2006 but resigned his seat only in March.

As for Mulcair, 12 long months ago he was basking in the glowing reviews of his performance as chief-questioner of the government in the Commons.

The NDP leader was never more on a roll than over the time of the Senate scandal. It was in its wake that he came to have a larger-than-life presence in question period. He will probably go down in modern Canadian history as the official Opposition leader who will have asked the most questions of a government over the course of a single session.

A year later, Mulcair's parliamentary persona feels too big for the support role of leader of the third party in the House. In the new House of Commons, he looks like a square peg in a round hole. At least for the time being, his famous prosecutorial skills are wasted on a Liberal prime minister that too many New Democrats for comfort like better than they do their own leader.

At year's end, Harper is headed for political retirement but not mostly for what the Duffy trial has brought to light. The betting is that Mulcair — whose oratory feats on the Senate turned out to be wasted on the country's voters — will not be far behind.

As for Duffy, except among a handful of allegedly profligate senators, his ultimate fate is a matter of relative indifference.

The Senate saga was the biggest political drama of the last federal decade but it earned none of its main actors a curtain call.

Chantal Hébert is a national affairs writer. Her column appears in Metro every Thursday.

THE MICROTREND: Battle roy-owl

The forest isn't big enough for both of them. A turf war has broken out in the Pacific Northwest, and the instigator is the barred owl. Habit degradation in the Prairies has been driving the hearty invasive species west into the stomping grounds of the northern spotted owl. And the barred owl is having a hoot out-eating and out-breeding everything in its path. Everywhere it goes, the spotted owl is declining fast: By up to 77 per cent in Washington and 68 per cent in Oregon since 1985, says a new U.S. study. Hardly a handful are left in B.C. As if it wasn't tough enough out there for a spotted owl: Development has destroyed the old-growth trees where it likes to nest and pushed it away from its favourite prey — a major problem for these polka-dotted picky eaters. The areas where spotted owl populations are sliding slowest have gotten human help with removing the nasty new neighbours. SOURCE: THE WASHINGTON POST

ROSEMARY WESTWOOD

metroview

A lengthy disruption over Katie the dog gives me hope

Toronto ground to a halt for two hours yesterday over the life-and-death drama of Katie, the German shepherd.

The north-south subway line was out of service while transit workers rescued the dog from the track rails, where she mysteriously got caught.

Media live-tweeted updates from the scene ("Did she make it?" my colleagues kept asking as they checked Twitter) and a few posted photos of Katie on a stretcher, wrapped in a bloodied blanket. For some, it was just too much.

"@680NEWS DELETE THIS INSENSITIVE PICTURE Would you post a picture of a person trapped on tracks? #topoli #Katie" tweeted @Hohummm.

"RIP," wrote another, after news broke Katie had been put down. "Very sad incident on the TTC tracks today," the mayor tweeted.

What kind people live in this city, I thought, as a dog swallowed our short attention spans and #katie started trending across Toronto. For others, that was all too much, too.

"Shuttle buses, thousands of people having their afternoon commute ruined, for a dog," an acquaintance texted. "Would the line have been shut for a raccoon? A squirrel? A rat?"

"What an incredible waste," he went on. "I hope the irresponsible dog owner gets the bill."

This is, to quote my acquaintance, an "incredible example of something," or perhaps two things: our capacity to care, and our capacity to care on a scale.

A few years ago, researchers tested people's sympathy for humans (adult and baby) and dogs (adult and puppy).

"The 'winner' was not the puppy but the human infant. The puppy, however, came in a close second with the adult dog not far behind," Wired magazine reported, while noting that another study found people are more willing to save their personal pet than a "foreign tourist."

This could be considered depressing, but I don't think so. First, everyone hates tourists. More importantly, a lengthy disruption over a dog gives me cause for hope.

It shows that people do care about other beings, despite the common assumption we're living in the most selfish, dehumanizing society created.

Normally, shutdowns turn trains and subway stations into sweltering hellholes. This time, they were hellholes with a heart.

And I have faith the empathy hierarchy can be manipulated.

I'm sure we'll one day learn about the superior intellect of the racoon (perhaps even the rat) and start adopting them as pets, thus improving the likelihood we'd stall a subway to save one. Tourists, though — they're screwed.

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metro LIFE

Your essential daily news

Thursday, December 17, 2015

Also on our Over it! list: Enough with the spoiler alerts and trigger warnings. Manage yourself, already.

Over it! 2015 edition

Spoiler alert: This is an unscientific look at some popular terms and favourite things of the year that we need to leave behind come 2016 because, frankly, they give us a headache. For your consideration and in no particular order, here they are: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

1 Adult colouring books

Yes, millions sold! Yes, mindfulness! Yes, beautiful flowers and geometric patterns and all manner of animal life and wonder! We now have enough things for grown-ups to colour to keep us stress-free clear through to Armageddon.

2 Tiny houses

According to Thetinylife.com, the typical U.S. home is about 2,600 square feet. The typical tiny house is 100- to-400-square feet. Some of us have been there. It's not a pretty thing. Find some other social movement.

3 Diffuser bottles

You know those often brightly coloured plastic bottles with the filter thing in the centre where you put your cut fruit and whatever else you can think of to flavour your water? Just hydrate.

4 Man buns

They're everywhere, except maybe the majority of male heads in real life. A clip-in version is a scary little pouf.

5 Cauliflower

Wayyyy back in 2013, the question was posed: is cauliflower the new kale? It's 2015, people who have just discovered baked and roasted cauliflower, mashed cauliflower, cauliflower pasta sauce, cauliflower pizza crust and fancy things to do with what is a fine thing now delicately plated in fine restaurants.

6 Artisanal and curated

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LOST CIVILIZATION

Author Graham Hancock is back with alt history sequel

Sue Carter
For Metro Canada

Twenty years ago, when Graham Hancock's book Fingerprints of the Gods was first published, it caused quite the stir among archaeologists, historians and conspiracy theorists. After years of research, the U.K. journalist hypothesized that 12,800 years ago, a massive, cataclysmic comet had hit the Earth, essentially wiping out a highly advanced ancient civilization. The remaining survivors then canvassed the world, landing in such places as Egypt, Turkey and Peru, in hopes of spreading their wisdom. Some of those sages or magicians as they were known, were responsible for constructing such wonders as the Sphinx, which Hancock's book suggests actually predated the ancient Egyptians.

Although Hancock's theories of a lost civilization were dismissed by experts (he's been referred to as both a pseudoscientist and a "Pyramidiot"), readers didn't care — and neither did he. The book sold more than 7 million copies worldwide, and turned Hancock into an icon of the "alternative history" movement. He has now returned with more evidence to back up his first book with its sequel, Magicians of the Gods.

Hancock still has his fair share of naysayers, but it's a new generation of younger fans who showed up at his recent sold-out 22-stop tour across the U.S. and Canada. His message is appealing to younger, social-media-savvy readers, many of who are cynical about old-school power structures in the aftermath of whistleblowers such as Julian Assange and Edward Snowden.

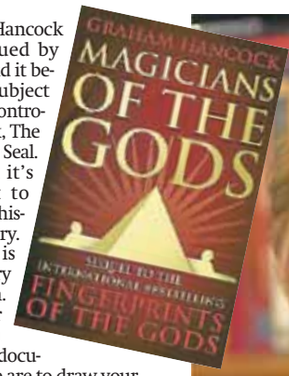
"There is a deep distrust of authority now. It's grounded; it's not a conspiracy theory. We know that we've been lied to quite often, for example, about the Iraq War. I think those lies have devalued the currency of authority," says Hancock, who describes Magicians of the Gods as a fundamentally rebellious book. "It's not enough for an archaeologist to say anymore, 'Look, I know this is how things are.' It turns people off now. They'd rather see people engage with the ideas."

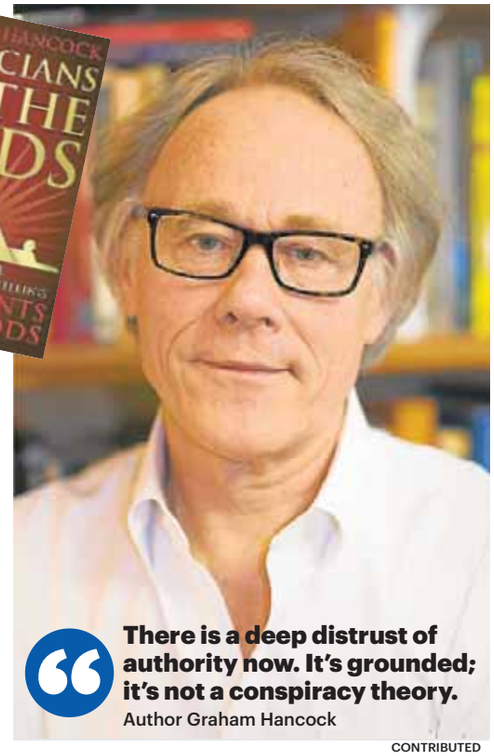
As Hancock was writing his first book, he says he couldn't "point out that smoking gun," but that within the last eight years, mainstream science journals have presented more evidence that prove his theory about the massive extinction. Perhaps the most challenging or troublesome idea in Magicians of the Gods is the suggestion that a 20-mile-wide fragment of the original comet is potentially going to hit Earth in 2030 — an event referred to in various cultures as the "Great Return." When asked how we should prepare for such an occasion, Hancock says that as a journalist, it's his role to report the evidence as he uncovers it, not suggest a course of action.

Hancock's background as a reporter is how he was introduced to alternative history in the first place. During the 1970s and '80s, he covered East Africa for the London Times and The Economist. While in Ethiopia he became intrigued with a story about how the lost covenant of the ark has been hidden in the country for centuries. Although experts debunked the claim, Hancock was intrigued by the story and it became the subject of his first controversial book, The Sign and the Seal.

"I think it's important to realize that history is a story. And that it is often a story told by men. The further back you go, the less documents there are to draw your historical narratives from. The more it becomes a matter of speculation, and putting bits and pieces together," he says. "It's really a suggestion, an interpretation, a construing of data. I don't think it's healthy for this very important data about our past, who we are, and what we're doing here to be entrusted solely in the hands of a very small group of scholars. Twenty years ago it was enough for professor X or Y to say this is impossible, it can't be true. But that doesn't work today."

Sue Carter is the editor at Quill & Quire magazine.





There is a deep distrust of authority now. It's grounded; it's not a conspiracy theory.
Author Graham Hancock

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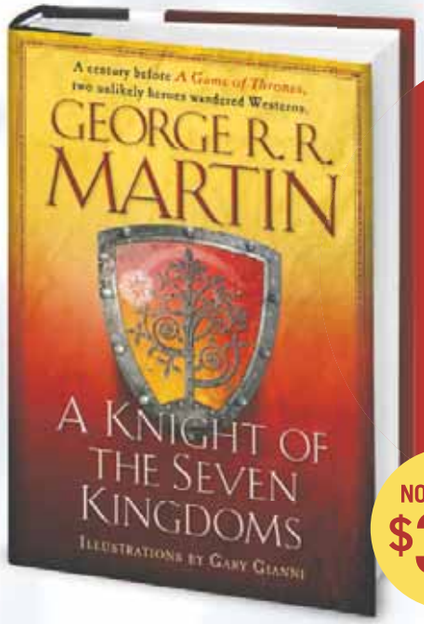
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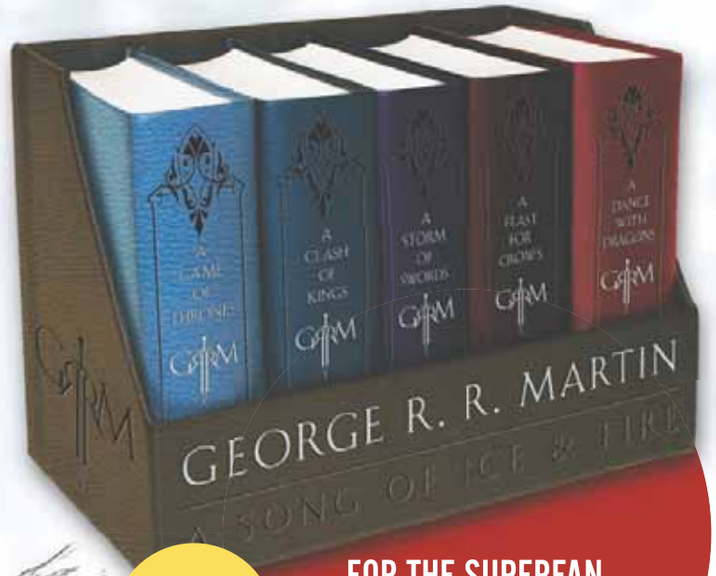

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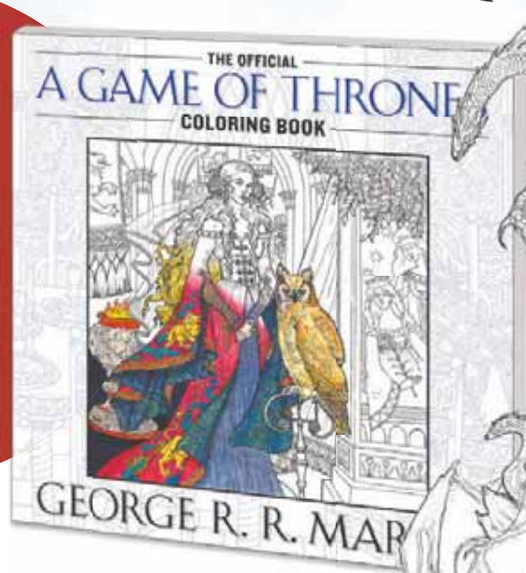

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Big Bang's big lead up

ALL PHOTOS: TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE/ISTOCK/CONTRIBUTED

THE BIG NIGHT

Midseason finale

For nine seasons, the sexuality of Sheldon Cooper (Jim Parsons) on The Big Bang Theory has been a rich source of speculation. Essays devoted to his asexuality, sexual orientation and overall social survival skills have graced publications big and small, sending viewers into a frenzy when the character finally settled into a relationship with Amy Farrah Fowler (Mayim Bialik). Still, the couple could barely hold hands in public, let alone make out or get physical between the sheets. Until now, that is. On Thursday's mid-season finale (8 p.m. on CTV and CBS), The Opening Night Excitation, Sheldon decides to skip the opening night of Star Wars to spend Amy's birthday with her now that they're back together. His gift? Finally giving in to coitus. "Believe it or not they have been dating on and off for five-and-a-half years now, and that was enough time for Amy to wait," showrunner Steven Molaro told Torstar News Service.

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With Sheldon and Amy about to have sex on the long-running sitcom, here's a look back at key moments in their relationship. Beware: spoilers ahead. **TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE**

SEASON 8, EPISODE 24

The engagement ring reveal

At this point, everyone in the ragtag group but Amy knew that Sheldon was planning to propose. According to Molaro, that ring won't come into play again anytime soon, since that's too big of a step for the couple to take just yet. But he's very aware that it's still in play. "It won't come up immediately, but it will certainly be addressed at some point in the near future. We're going to take a chance to take a step back from the weighty, heavy moments between Sheldon and Amy in the new year, and enjoy the rest of the characters and relationships going on there."

SEASON 7, EPISODE 15,

The first (real) kiss

Sheldon may have first kissed Amy to prove a point, but 11 seconds later it became clear that he liked it a lot more than he thought he would. Turns out even a man who aspired to be as emotionless as Spock can get weak in the knees. "We love these characters and they're real to us," Molaro says. "I remember when we were writing that kiss on the train, we weren't fighting in the writers' room, but there was a tension and a heat to our debating how it should play out."

SEASON 8, EPISODE 8

The first "I love you"

Sheldon may have been freaked out by prom, but he had no qualms about how he felt toward Amy. When she couldn't spit out the words "I love you," he went first with a sweet little, "I love you, too." "There was definitely some heated discussion about how exactly it should go down, but when we landed on the thought that Amy was struggling to get the words out, and that their first I love you was actually an I love you too, that seemed really interesting and appealing to us," Molaro says.

SEASON 4, EPISODE 20

The sex rumour

Before Thursday night, the closest Amy and Sheldon got to being intimate was when they decided to put a gossip theory to the test: by spreading the rumour that they had sex. "When Penny (Kaley Cuoco) tells Koothrappali (Kunal Nayyar) that Sheldon and Amy were going to be intimate, Koothrappali said, 'Shut your ass.' . . . We were talking about how funny that was to us."

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JOHANNA SCHNELLER WHAT I'M WATCHING

Empire's emotional toll

THE SHOW: Empire, Season 2, Episode 10 (City/Fox)
THE MOMENT: The Spit

Five other series put together won't dazzle as much as five minutes of Taraji P. Henson in Empire.

Record mogul Cookie Lyon (Taraji P. Henson) is having quite the day. Award nominations are being announced, and her ex-husband Lucious (Terrence Howard) and two sons are candidates. She's hosting a concert at the prison where she did 17 years.

She's running interference for her openly gay son, who is secretly dating a woman (Alicia Keys). And she's racing to a boardroom vote, because scheming lesbian Mimi (Marissa Tomei) wants to kick Lucious out. Plus, she's doing it all in a skintight leather dress and a massive black-and-white striped fur chubbie. Just as Cookie's youngest son, Hakeem, is casting the deciding vote, who sidles in but Camilla (Naomi Campbell) — Hakeem's ex-girlfriend, and Tomei's new wife! Sporting a huge fur chubbie of her own! Camilla smirks. She has it rigged. Cookie spits in her face.

Wowza! Five other series put together won't dazzle you half as much as five minutes of Empire. Taraji P. Henson alone would be enough, but then there's her wardrobe! Plus production numbers (dancers on hoverboards! Singers in gold-spiked hot pants!). Major plot twists eight times an hour! And heartfelt speeches (prison is hard on women! Human sexuality is fluid! Black lives matter!). The spit isn't even the climax of this episode: a pregnant woman gets pushed down the stairs! A man storms in with a gun! Lucious and his son become rival nominees! Every week it's like this — I collapse on the sofa so spent that I want a cigarette. And I don't smoke.

Johanna Schneller is a media connoisseur who zeroes in on pop-culture moments. She appears Monday through Thursday.

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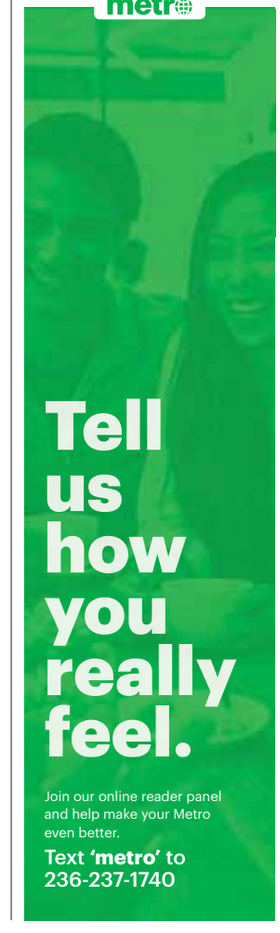

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GOSSIP BRIEFS

Lupita Nyong'o's clueless Star Wars audition

Hollywood can keep you busy, especially after you've won an Oscar for your film debut.

That might explain why Lupita Nyong'o didn't quite connect the dots when she had a meeting with J.J. Abrams a couple of years ago.

"I didn't really know what I was auditioning for," said Nyong'o, who plays the alien Maz Kanata in The Force Awakens, the latest Star Wars film. "I guess I thought I should find work, you know? I was so busy, I was working with adrenaline, so I went in and out. I barely remember that audition, and then two months later (Abrams) called me."

So what did this mystery audition entail, exactly?

"I remember crouching around and using my hands as a gun."

Sounds... fun?

NED EHRBAR/ METRO HOLLYWOOD

Lamar Odom is 'not doing great'

Not to bum you out too much so close to the holidays, but here's an update on convalescing brothel-patronizing Lamar Odom.

"He's not doing great," a source tells Entertainment Tonight. "His speech is still slurred and he can barely walk on his own yet. He forgets a lot of people's names — sometimes even his own. He definitely has some memory loss."

Those close to the former NBA star are still hoping for him to be "mentally fully recovered" in a year and a half's time, but the progress is frustratingly slow. Khloe Kardashian, for her part, posted a video to her website recently expressing her hopes for the future.

"Lord knows I've had stress and anxiety lately," she said. "This year has been absolutely horrible, but it's almost done. I'm just praying that 2016 will be better. It has to be."

NED EHRBAR/METRO HOLLYWOOD

THE VOICE

Road getting rocky for Blake and Gwen

I'm sure it's just a total, complete coincidence that just after the latest season of The Voice ends, we get our first report of trouble in the romance between co-coaches Gwen Stefani and Blake Shelton.

Not suspicious at all, this.

So the duo, both recently divorced and involved in a "romance" that's been played up for the cameras during the most recent season of The Voice, are said to be hitting a rough patch after a backstage incident in which Shelton left his phone behind in the makeup room and Stefani witnessed a text message come in from his ex-wife, Miranda Lambert, according to In Touch.

"Gwen saw it and lost it. She found Blake and asked to speak to him privately, but he said he couldn't right then and there. She had tears running down her face and went and locked herself in her dressing room," a source says.

"Gwen has seen texts between Blake and Miranda. She's really a mess over this."

Is she, though?

Or is this all part of the predetermined plan? When did I become so cynical?

NED EHRBAR/ METRO HOLLYWOOD

The Weeknd in hot water with Bella Hadid

PARTY SCENE

The Canadian was reportedly spotted getting cozy with fans

Ned Ehrbar
Metro | Hollywood

When will people learn that parties are not the best places to misbehave? You know, because other people can see you?

Singer The Weeknd apparently didn't realize this when he decided to get with a pair of eager young fans at a private party celebrating the release of his new album — a party from which 19-year-old model girlfriend (as in she's a model and his girlfriend, not a model girlfriend,) Bella Hadid was conspicuously absent.

"He went to an after-party at a private house in L.A.," a source tells Life & Style, where he hit it off with a blonde and a brunette.

"He was making out with both of them, going back and forth. Then they disappeared into a bedroom together."

But it's totally cool, I'm sure he just wanted to explain to them in private how much he loves his girlfriend.

Now, maybe I'm a little out of touch, but what's a Weeknd?

The Weeknd's girlfriend, model Bella Hadid, was not present at a steamy L.A. party. GETTY IMAGES

OH WHAT FUN IT IS TO BE DONE.

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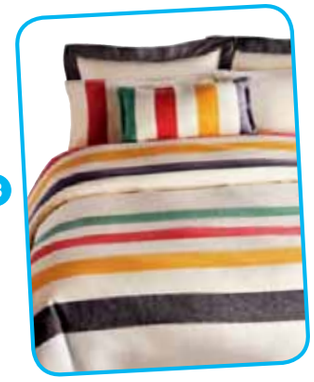
Your essential daily news

Researchers in France develop light-emitting textile that could remove pollution from homes

These gifts are keepers

Today is National Regifting Day. Want to give something special that won't be passed from friend to friend? Here's a roundup of stylish gifts that promise to stay near and dear to the recipient.

Karl Lohnes
For Metro Canada



1 Decorative Red Cross Hot-Water Bottle
It's hot and looks great in a tight turtleneck — a keeper for sure! $15, Simons.ca

2 Philips Sonicare DiamondClean, Black
Add high design and technology to his or her bathroom. The cup is also the charger, and the set includes a travel pack charger that plugs into the laptop. $229, Walmart.ca

3 Hudson's Bay Company Multi-Stripe Flannel Sheet Set
Classic stripe and the cosiness of high-quality flannel makes the perfect personal (or selfish) gift. From $149, TheBay.com

4 VertuoLine Evoluo Cherry Red
Get your java style on with the touch of a button. This machine makes a quality cup of coffee or a true Euro-style espresso — you decide for yourself. $249, Nespresso.com

5 Cire Trudon's Nazareth Candle
The finest candle in the world will help keep the memories of Christmas alive well after the holidays. $125, Avenue-Road.com

6 15x Magnifying LED Lighted Mirror with Suction Cups
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Sparkle and shine for the holidays

SEASONAL DECOR

Ideas and items to add effervescence to your home

Even if you practise restraint in your everyday home decor, you might be inclined toward a bit of sizzle and sparkle when the holidays roll around.

The season is a great excuse to let your festive flag fly, so to speak, and few things say "festive" like decor that's got some glitz, glitter or gilding. Below are some resources to get things shimmering (Note: The stores with no Canadian locations do ship to Canada):

Spray it

"My go-to holiday look each season? Winter wonderland meets glamour," says New York designer Genevieve Gorder.

She uses metallic and glittery spray paint to add personalized flair. If you're on a budget or are fairly crafty, this is a good option. Jazz up stuff you already have like terra cotta pots, tea light holders, candlesticks, picture frames and serving trays. Valspar has a line of paints that stick to most materials, and come in both opaque and translucent finishes. (valspar.com)

Glitter 101

If you gather bare branches on a walk or buy some from a garden centre, find instructions for glittering them up at momtastic.com . After painting them, spray with adhesive, and then dip them in both glitter and clear crystalline sprinkles. The sprinkles add an icy extra touch. If you're tight on work space (glittering is a messy business), consider glitter in a tube. Jo-Ann craft stores have Stickles, glitter glue that comes in a bunch of colours and is easy to dab or swab. (joann.com)

Around the home

Making a tabletop holiday village is easy and inexpensive. Got some plastic toy animals lying around? Give them a coat of metallic paint. A stack of newspapers or old magazines? Transform them with a few folds into trees, and spray them with glitter paint.

You can build a few houses out of chipboard, paint and powdered glitter, and create your tableau; it's a fun project to do with kids or friends. Martha Stewart has instructions at marthastewart.com.

Non-traditional

For those looking to decorate outside the traditional red/green or blue/white realm, Target has a collection of glittery faux bottlebrush trees in colours like copper, orchid, turquoise, purple and mocha. Seasonal greetings stencilled in metallic sequins bring sparkle to the sofa on throw pillows. (target.com)

Dress the base of the Christmas tree with an organza skirt dusted with glitter from Kohl's. Or Zazzle has a snazzy one in shimmery lemon yellow. (kohls.com; zazzle.ca)

At the table

You can set the holiday table with subtle shine using Sandy Chilewich's brass or silver Drift placemats, which have an angular, geometric design inspired by woodblock prints. Add a few slim white, copper or silver glass trees from CB2 for a tablescape that's minimalist yet merry. (chilewich.com; cb2.com)

Outdoors

Bring the bling outdoors, too, with large-scale decorations. Wayfair has a set of sparkly, lighted gift boxes. Frontgate's gold, silver or red ornaments come with fibre-optic and LED lights. (wayfair.com; frontgate.com)

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ball ornaments banded in glittering filigree are a chic and elegant addition to the tree. Below: A Baroque paper poinsettia ball ornament in a midnight hue, trimmed with gold glitter, adds drama. JOSS AND MAIN VIA THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Embellish items you may have around the house, like trays and votive holders and picture frames, with glitter and metallic spray paint. VALSPAR VIA THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

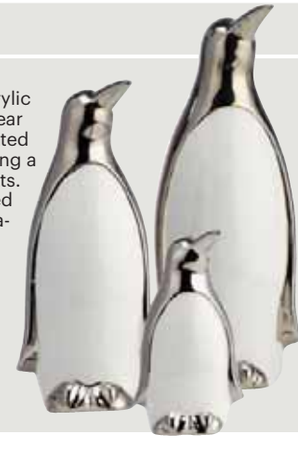
A POP OF PERSONALITY

Cold and critters

Z Gallerie offers boxes of gold or silver acrylic "ice gems" that look like ice cubes. In a clear vase, they'd be a great base for white painted branches or greenery. Or scatter them along a faux fur runner with some tiny twinkle lights. The retailer also has a series of silver-plated ceramic penguins, and sexy starburst ornaments with a retro vibe. (zgallerie.com)

Round and jolly

Paper poinsettia balls from Joss and Main in a dramatic midnight hue and edged in golden glitter bring baroque élan to the mantel. Filigree-wrapped balls and mini tiara ornaments add royal style. (jossandmain.com)



Silver-plated ceramic penguins add a dash of chic swagger to holiday decor. Z GALLERIE VIA THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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P.K. Subban weighed in on Pee-Kay vs. Pay-Kah: "Since we're changing the pronunciation of my name, just start calling me Denzel."

NCAA hoops dribble to city

BASKETBALL

2017 Vancouver Showcase aims to attract top U.S. colleges

Cam Tucker
Metro | Vancouver

The possibility of the top NCAA Division I basketball teams from the U.S. playing in Vancouver has moved closer to reality.

With the North Shore Mountains providing a picturesque snow-capped backdrop, the first-ever Vancouver Showcase basketball tournament was unveiled at a news conference at the Vancouver Convention Centre on Wednesday.

The inaugural event will take place in November 2017, featuring a total of 16 NCAA Division I teams — eight men's and eight women's in two tournaments — in regular season competition.

The Convention Centre's exhibition space will be turned into a 3,000-plus seat venue for the event, according to a news release. The Vancouver Showcase is slated to become an annual event, with a five-year commitment to start, said Brooks Downing, president and CEO of bd Global, which runs numerous college basketball showcase tournaments in cities throughout the U.S. "We don't have an end date," said Downing. "We want this to be something that will stay here for years to come.

Teams for the 2017 event weren't announced Wednesday.

"Each year when we have an event, it would be during the event we would announce next year's field," said Downing. "So, I would think no later than next November but I hope to be a little bit more aggressive with that and get it in the next few months."

Downing said a "few" teams — on both the men's and women's sides — have already verbally agreed for 2017. NCAA rules, he said, permits a team to only participate in a particular event once every four years. "We plan to bring some of the very best programs in the sport," he said.

Teams like Gonzaga, Oklahoma State and Stanford have expressed interest in potentially coming to Vancouver.

Tournament co-director Howard Kelsey called Wednesday's announcement "one of the most important" in the city's basketball history, next to the NBA awarding Vancouver a franchise in the 1990s.

He said a U.S. college team with a Canadian – or multiple Canadians – on its roster would be of particular interest to participate in the Vancouver event.

"That's what we're going to go after," said Kelsey.

> **We want this to be something that stays here for years to come.**
> bd Global CEO Brook Downing on the NCAA Division 1 coming to Vancouver

Left to right: Michelle Collens of Sport Hosting Vancouver, David Munro, co-director for the Vancouver Showcase, Howard Kelsey, co-director for the Vancouver Showcase, and Brooks Downing, president of bd Global, announced the inaugural NCAA Division I basketball Vancouver Showcase for November 2017 during a news conference on Wednesday. CAM TUCKER/METRO

NHL

Canucks sinking in overall standings

The Vancouver Canucks are only two games deep into their six-game road trip, but it already feels like it has struck disastrous proportions.

After coming out on the wrong end of a 4-0 decision in Chicago on Sunday, the Canucks embarrassed themselves in a 6-2 loss to the Minnesota Wild two nights later. Had it not been for the play of goalie Ryan Miller, who knows how many more goals the local NHL club could've given up?

They were that bad.

The losses have been steadily piling up since early November. There have been some bad ones along the way, as the Canucks have been beset by injuries to centre Brandon Sutter and defencemen Luca Sbisa and Dan Hamhuis.

But Tuesday's debacle in Minnesota had a particularly frustrating stench to it. In addition to the six goals given up, the Canucks allowed 36 shots on Miller through two periods, before head coach Willie Desjardins finally removed his goalie from the slaughter to begin the third period.

The Canucks, in Philadelphia to play the Flyers on Thursday, have now moved down to sixth in the Pacific Division. As of Wednesday, they sit 25th in the NHL's overall standings, only five points better than last-place Columbus. CAM TUCKER/METRO

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IN BRIEF

B.C. talent added to Fight Night card in February

Canadians Shane (Shaolin) Campbell and Sarah (Cheesecake) Moras have been added to the UFC's televised Fight Night card Feb. 21 in Pittsburgh.

Campbell (12-3-0) takes on lightweight James Krause while Moras (4-3-0) faces Lauren Murphy, ranked 15th among bantamweight contenders.

The two Canadians are teammates at Toshido MMA in Kelowna.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

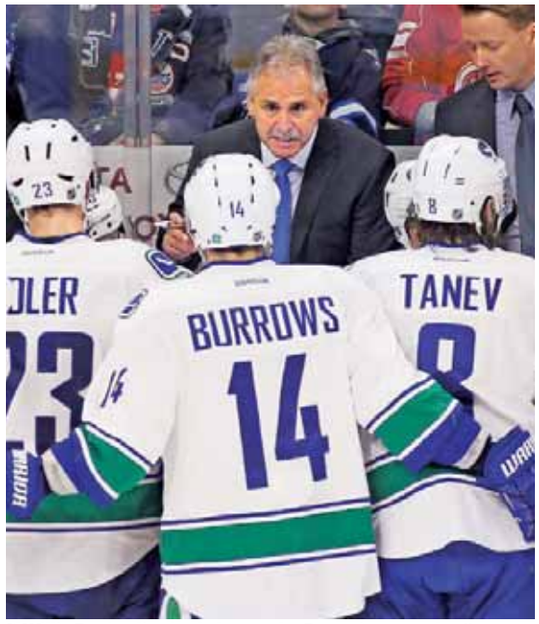
Holtby-led Caps beat Sens

Braden Holtby made 26 saves to help the Washington Capitals beat the Ottawa Senators 2-1 on Wednesday night.

Holtby lowered his NHL-best goals-against average to 1.83 and improved to 20-4-1. He has allowed three goals in his last three games, making 35 saves in a 2-1 victory at Tampa Bay on Saturday night and 44 in a 4-1 victory over Pittsburgh on Monday night.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pitt of despair avoided



If Willie Desjardins had chosen the Penguins over the Canucks two summers ago, he'd likely be out of a job right now.

MARIANNE HELM/GETTY IMAGES

THE HOCKEY NEWS
Ronnie Shuker

If not for a smart career decision only 18 months ago, it would've been Willie Desjardins' head on a platter last weekend instead of Mike Johnston's. Instead, Desjardins has so far survived the coaching guillotine, despite having a bumbling general (mis)manager above him.

In June 2014, Desjardins turned down the Pittsburgh Penguins' offer for the head coaching position and chose the Vancouver Canucks. Good thing, too, because the heat would've been on him instantly in Steeltown after a sixth consecutive season without a Stanley Cup final appearance. His team is no better than the one he turned down — in fact, it's worse — but Desjardins appears to be in no danger of being placed on the chopping block, a fate Johnston finally succumbed to when he was axed last Saturday.

The parallels between the two teams are striking. The Penguins are led by two stars upfront in Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin, while the Canucks have their own dynamic duo in the Sedins. And the knock on both clubs has been a dreadful supporting cast and a dry prospect pipeline.

Which brings us to the general (mis)managers.

Pittsburgh hired its current GM, Jim Rutherford, in the spring of 2014, as did Vancouver when it tabbed Jim Benning for the job. Those two, in turn, hired rookie coaches to return their teams to contender status after disappointing seasons. Johnston didn't even last a season and a half in Pittsburgh before getting fired. But he was merely the fall guy for Rutherford, who saddled him with a top-heavy roster.

Meanwhile, Desjardins managed to make some decent tasting lemonade out of the lemons Benning handed him last season. This season, however, not even a renaissance from the Sedins has been able to overcome a severe dearth of depth and competent goaltending. And that's on Benning, who's trying to rebuild on the fly while staying competitive. Just like Rutherford forced Johnston to work with a certain car wreck, Benning has basically handed Desjardins a K-car and told him to go win the Indy 500. The only reason the Canucks are even in the playoff race is because the Pacific has become the worst division in the NHL.

Desjardins is a smart coach, who has won championships at every level he's coached. Here's hoping he doesn't become the sacrificial lamb because the executioner up top doesn't how to wield power properly.

4

Only four points separate second place from last (seventh) in the mediocre Pacific Division.

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RECIPE French Onion Soup

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

You won't believe you made your favourite pub food and, better yet, you decide how high to croutons get piled.

Ready in
Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 30 minutes
Serves 4

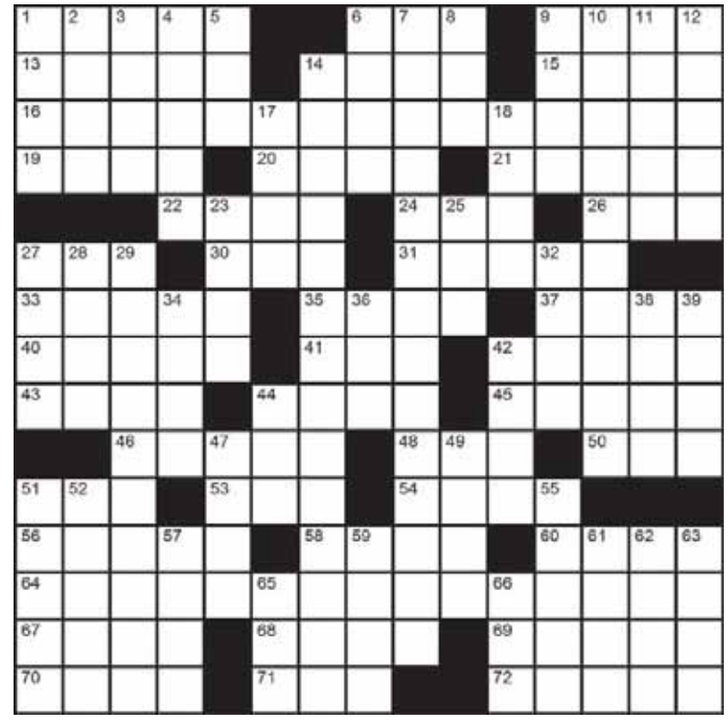
Ingredients
- 2 onions , thinly sliced
- 1 clove of garlic, minced
- 2 Tbsp butter
- 2 tsp sugar
- 1 Tbsp fresh thyme
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 Tbsp flour
- 1 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 4 cups beef stock
- Half a stick of baguette
- 1 cup grated Gruyère and Parmesan mixed

Directions
1. In a Dutch oven, melt butter and toss onion slices, garlic, sugar, thyme and pinch of salt and pepper. Cook over medium low heat for 15 to 20 minutes, stirring frequently, until onions soften.
2. Sprinkle the flour over the onion mixture and stir. Add the vinegar and a cup of stock. Stir well, scraping the bottom of the pot to deglaze. Add the rest of the stock and simmer for 10 minutes.
3. Turn your oven onto broil. Cut bread into 1-inch thick slices. Cut as many slices as bowls of soup you'll be serving. Lay them on a cookie sheet and now put a layer of the cheese mix on each piece. Broil in the oven until cheese melts and bread is golden brown.
4. Remove bread from oven and cut into pieces. Ladle the soup into bowls and top with a slice of bread's worth of croutons.

FOR MORE MEAL IDEAS, VISIT SWEETPOTATOCHRONICLES.COM

CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. Kate _ (Designer brand)
6. In past times
9. '_' _ Edmonton
13. 'Ripley's Believe It _ _!'
14. Ocean colour, en francais
15. Thomas Augustine _: "Rule, Britannia" composer
16. Louisbourg... Does this in the 18th century on Cape Breton Island: 3 wds.
19. Buy and _, as stock
20. Jam in
21. Disconcerted
22. Concrete chunk
24. Use up
26. Tiny tallnesses
27. "20/20" network
30. _ _ hurry (Rushed)
31. Folklore fellow Tom
33. Writer's ache
35. Uncommon, to Caesar
37. Blunders
40. 6:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.
41. Jackie O's hubby
42. Blood, _ & Tears
43. Greek portico
44. International oil gr.
45. As per #14-Down... "Peyton _" (Primetime soap of the 1960s)
46. Extreme
48. Prior
50. Nature's morning coat
51. Ship-shaped tableware ornament
53. Poetic preposition
54. Towel holders
56. "Over the Rainbow" co-composer Harold
58. Make a scarf
60. Nile wader
64. Newfoundland pudding Figgy Duff or Quebec meat pie Tourtiere, for example: 2 wds.
67. Forum outfit
68. Take _ the waist, as alterations: 2 wds.
69. "Home _" (1990)
70. Original space matter
71. Grey hue
72. Outdoes

DOWN
1. Cries
2. Sister on "Charmed"
3. Indigo
4. As per #14-Down... "Valley of the _" (1967)
5. Plane's take-off info
6. _ Romeo (Sports car)
7. Pom-pommed winterwear item in the Hudson's Bay Company Collection, Wool _ _ Tuque
8. Their-not
9. Wild West's Wyatt
10. Its aroma draws customers into the bakery each day: 2 wds.
11. Beginning
12. Breaks
14. Vancouver-born actress who starred on the show at #45-Across and in the movie at #4-Down: 2 wds.
17. Skim
18. Ballet skirt
23. Gloss-placing spots
25. "Gotcha!"
27. Pretends
28. England denizen, e.g.
29. Soldier's disguise
32. Kitten's whimper
34. Recipe result
36. 'Hect' ending
38. Sprint
39. Brood
42. Accelerated
44. Portland's state, briefly
47. Ms. Collette
49. Oscar-winning composer Nino
51. Dapper
52. Mr. Flynn
55. Sashay
57. Cheese type
59. Old Testament sailor
61. Life stories, briefly
62. Fails to be
63. Tal Bachman's "_ So High"
65. Ms. Carrere
66. Sci. spot

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS by Sally Brompton

Aries March 21 - April 20
In your rush to get ahead of the game you may take on too much. You sometimes have the strength to do two or even three jobs at once but if you do too much now you may regret it later on. Slow down.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
If you stick your nose in other people's business you may regret it. Think how you would feel if others were to involve themselves in your private affairs without being invited.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
Is family more important than work? That's the question you need to answer today. Eventually you'll find a stable balance between your home life and your more worldly ambitions.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
Keep opinions to yourself. There's no point trying to persuade others to see things your way — they can't, it is beyond them. Go your own way. You don't need public support.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
Keep your options open and listen to advice from people with expertise. You may not like to admit that others know best but in some areas they do and you should be big enough to acknowledge that fact.

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
You'll wish you were some place else today. But no matter how difficult the situation you have to face you'll conquer it before the day is over. You're tougher than you realize Virgo!

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
If your energy takes a nose-dive then stop what you're doing and take a break. Each hour you push yourself beyond your limits will take at least a day to recover. Be kind to yourself.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
You can't seem to shake off the feeling that something bad is going to happen. Most likely it's all in your head but steer clear of situations you can't fully control. Just in case.

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Material and professional success is not the most important thing in your life. What matters most now is that you take the opportunity to improve your domestic situation. Work can wait but loved ones cannot.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
You may find it hard to get started today but once you do you'll amaze everyone by how quickly you get through your workload. Start early and the evening should be free for more enjoyable activities.

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Resist the urge to point out other people's faults and failings. And don't cut corners or do anything underhand — or it could be your faults and failings that are made public.

Pisces Feb. 20 - March 20
It's likely you will clash with someone in a position of authority. Stand your ground and refuse to be intimidated but also be ready to meet them halfway if they suggest a compromise.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

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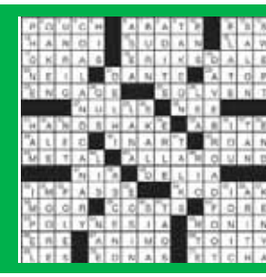

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9	4	1	5	7	3	2	8	6
3	5	2	8	4	6	7	9	1
6	7	8	9	2	1	4	3	5

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